DAVID COVERDALE

Purple prose

DAVID Coverdale was, understandably, quite knackered. Leicester last night; London tonight. A lengthy American tour had been completed only a couple of days earlier. Jet-lag, and all its horrible effects, had set in. Life as vocalist in Deep Purple is not an easy one.

Coverdale is one of Purple's new breed, the others being bassist Glenn Hughes, and, more recently, guitarist Tommy Bolin. But he's been living the role as Ian Gillan's replacement for "kicking the ass of three years" now and feels settled in enough to toss in the odd controversial statement.

He's not too happy, for instance, about Purple's current live set.

"I still think we're asking too much of our audience," he'll tell you. "We start giving no-nonsense rock, with no subtleties. Then we go on to the solo spots where everybody does their own things.

"It's really unnecessary to over-indulge to the point we do. I think we should just go on and play to the people. I'd rather be regarded as an entertainer than a prima donna. The messing about can be done in the studio."

Explain.

"I don't see Purple as a group, you see. It's a concept. The musical interests in the band are so diverse and so stretched out that the idea of rock can sometimes get lost. Sometimes people put in their alternative interests and that can take away the essence."

Must be frustrating, in that case, to work under those conditions?

"It's frustrating as f—, to be honest. Being a part of a concept can be very limiting if you're not an instrumentalist. I'd rather run around the stage than be sitting in the dressing room having a smoke when somebody's doing the solo bit.

"You've also got to remember that Purple is five instrumentalists, five egomaniacs fighting for the limelight."

The excellent Tommy Bolin, apparently, has been having a bit of trouble in Britain living in Ritchie Blackmore's shoes. At Leicester, there were a few calls for Blackmore, Coverdale commented.

"If Tommy wants to blow it, he can blow it. He got a bit uptight at Leicester. He was doing a solo piece and it could only take one guy or chick to shout 'Blackmore' to throw it. For two years I was answering questions about Ian Gillan. It's something you have to live with and get over.

"The thing about Tommy is that he's been replacing people all the time. He replaced Joe Walsh in the James Gang and then Ritchie in Purple.

"I suppose he's got a bit of a chip on his shoulder. It's all a matter really of maturity and believing in yourself.

"Tommy is a gypsy nomad in guitar land. He can either show breathtaking genius or be very boring and mundane. Usually, he's breathtaking."